

REVIEWS

1. EVALUATING EDEN SERIES NO. 3. WHERE COMMUNITIES CARE: COMMUNITY-BASED WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH ASIA by Ashish Kothari, Neema Pathak and Farhad Vania. Published by Russel Press, Nottingham, UK. Published in 2000. Pp. xv+222. Price not mentioned.

The conservation of biodiversity and its judicious use is especially important in sustaining the livelihood of poor households across the world. Despite its critical importance, we continue to lose biodiversity at an alarming rate. For example, forests are being destroyed at the rate of an acre a second (World Bank), with unimaginable loss of biodiversity and serious erosion of income of the rural poor. Several factors contribute to the destruction of biodiversity — lack of clear property rights, distorted markets and prices, lack of appreciation of the value of biodiversity, poor management, paucity of financial resources, and general development pressures. The need to address these factors to conserve our biodiversity resources is great. Several successful examples at balancing biodiversity conservation with economic modernization exist at the national level. Conventions on Biological Diversity and the Global Environment Facility provides important means by which to share such examples across countries and scale them up rapidly. By bringing together a large body of policy makers, academics and representatives from the private sector and society, I hope that this book will provide the opportunity to exchange innovative solutions among development practitioners across the Subcontinent. Furthermore, to identify practical and workable solutions to sustainably manage this critical resource.

Kothari *et al.* deal with the above points in different case studies. In this book, there are eight case studies from India, three from Nepal, two from Pakistan and five from Sri Lanka. Seven case studies were carried out as part of

the Review, on the basis of the following criteria: coverage of a range of (a) countries in the region; (b) ecosystem types; (c) ethnic communities; (d) initiatives, including government, NGO and community-led; and (e) availability of an active partner at the site or nearby.

The book is structured as follows: introductory chapter explains the background and objectives of the Review, and the methodology and definitions used; Chapter 2 provides an ecological and socioeconomic profile of South Asia; Chapters 3 to 8 provide descriptions of the history and current status of wildlife/biodiversity conservation in general, and Community-based Wildlife Management (CWM) in particular, in the six countries; Chapter 9 draws out the major ecological, economic, social, and policy-level impact of CWM in the region; Chapter 10 is a detailed regional analysis of the issues arising out of CWM, experiences in these countries, and challenges facing the future of CWM; Chapter 11 highlights next steps at local, national, and regional levels.

The book also gives an overview of the studies on community-based wildlife management, or rather, community-based conservation. Out of the 25 biodiversity hot spots in the world, India is one of the megadiversity countries and has the second largest human population. The case studies show how community-led conservation is important to biodiversity for long term conservation. For instance, in Keoladeo National Park (India), the management plan was prepared after discussion with the concerned communities living on the fringes of the Park. In Jigme Dorji National Park

and Royal Manas National Park (Bhutan), the WWF had undertaken socioeconomic surveys and made management plans, with the help of the local communities. Forest Conservation and agro-biodiversity revival at Jardharaon. Uttar Pradesh (India), through the Chipko movement, the famous Himalayan struggle to protect natural forests against timber contractors and other forces of destruction.

The authors are of the opinion that, even today, the Governments and even some development organizations dictate most of the terms of biodiversity conservation with or without the consent of concerned communities. Conservationists have realized that without the full participation of local communities,

biodiversity conservation will get nowhere. Despite this realization, even today, the amount of resources spent by many development organizations on community consultations and community involvement in most projects remains inadequate. Do we have adequate community involvement in biodiversity conservation? This book is worth reading, to realise the importance of community participation in biodiversity conservation and wildlife management. The book is produced by Kalpavriksh (India) in collaboration with the International Institute of Environment and Development (UK).

■ M. ZAFAR-UL ISLAM

2. NATURE'S SPOKESMAN: M. KRISHNAN AND INDIA'S WILDLIFE:

Edited by Ramachandra Guha. Published in 2000. Oxford University Press. (22.5 x 14.5 cm), pp. 291. Price Rs. 595/-.

Some people say that it is not proper to review a book about your life-long hero, as objectivity is lost, but I will review this book, no matter what people say. I am proud to say that I am one of the many Indian naturalists who grew up cherishing M. Krishnan's highly readable newspaper column 'Country Notebook'. I do not remember when I first read his column in 'The Statesman', perhaps it was in 1964, when I was 14 years old, but what I do remember clearly is that I used to look forward to the otherwise rather sedate and boring *The Statesman* which carried Krishnan's fortnightly column. I still have old clippings from the late 1960s and 1970s.

M. Krishnan was not only an extraordinary naturalist and photographer, he was a philosopher, poet, art critic, translator, literary historian, Tamil litterateur, essayist and an artist. He was also a cricket buff! He had written columns on the Madras Test Match in 1952, for *The Statesman*. No doubt, with such varied

talent, Krishnan was abrasive and opinionated, though not arrogant, according to people who knew him personally.

NATURE'S SPOKESMAN is edited by another fan of Krishnan, well-known environmental historian Ramachandra Guha. After a brief introduction, which Guha calls 'The Worlds of M. Krishnan', he presents a selection of 68 essays. It must have been extremely difficult for Guha to select these essays from the hundreds scattered in *Madras Mail*, *The Statesman*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Shankar's Weekly* and others, since each piece needs to be leisurely savoured. I recommend this book for the field, where it should be read unhurriedly, beside a fireplace, in some remote, forest guesthouse, perhaps under a lantern! Only then may the reader appreciate the beauty of sentences like: 'unpredictable exuberance of the mighty Brahmaputra' (p. 153), 'it is easy to be solemnly pompous over a pledge of commitments'